

THE NATURAL CURE FOR SPIRITUAL DISEASE

: A Guide into Buddhist Science

by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

(translated by Santikaro Bhikkhu)

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Part III : NEW LIFE OF PEACE - YOUR FRUITS OF DHAMMA PRACTICE

(February 11, 1986)

Our apologies that the formatting &

Pali spelling in this chapter are not yet finished.

[\(click here for glossary\)](#)

I would like to express my joy in having a third opportunity to speak with you. In the first talk, we spoke about the way to study Dhamma. In the second talk, we spoke of how to practice Dhamma. Today, we will speak about the fruits and benefits of practicing Dhamma.

When we speak of the benefits of practicing Dhamma, we can divide them into two categories: first, a happy life free of problems, and second, the ability to use that life in the most successful and productive way according to our needs. Put another way, the two kinds of benefits are happiness and the appropriate use of that happiness for our needs. Together they can be called "New Life." We will get New Life from practicing Dhamma.

We will begin with the first benefit, the happy life free of problems. You must recollect, observe, and see the fact that this on-going process of life follows our instincts and proceeds under the power of these instincts, which we are unable to control. Because they are out of control, the instincts lead to things called "defilements" (kilesa).¹ Before going further, we ought to examine the defilements until they're understood clearly, for they are bound up with all spiritual disease.

DEFILED CONTROL

When defilements arise, this life -- in the language of Dhamma -- is sorrowful, that is, dukkha. We have experienced over and over again the kind of dukkha that we're discussing. We've become so familiar with it that most of us consider it normal, we don't even think it's a problem! Let's learn to distinguish the difference between two kinds of life: life when the defilements are in control and possession, and life when the defilements aren't running the show. We must understand both kinds of life. If you are unable to see and understand the defilements, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for you to practice and benefit from Dhamma. You won't know how to compare the life of defilement with a life free of defilement and see how different the two are. This is why I request that you try to understand the defilements as they arise in your own lives, even if they annoy you in the process. Study them and get to know them as they arise within you. The more deeply and completely you know them, as your insight into them grows, to that degree and no other, you will understand Dhamma and be able to benefit by Dhamma.

DELUDED OBSTRUCTIONS

The first nivarana, sensuousness, is of the greed type and the second, aversion, is of the anger type. The remaining three are of the delusion type. The third nivarana is thana-middha, when the mind lacks energy and is weak, tired, groggy, numb, drowsy, or stupefied. When the mind is low in energy it lacks clarity, freshness, brightness, and alertness. There are many symptoms of the dull, shrunken, lazy mind which all can be summarized as the lack of mental energy. This includes the dullness and sleepiness that follows from overeating. Hindered by thana-middha (sloth and torpor), it is difficult to think, reflect, listen, meditate, or do anything.

The fourth nivarana is the opposite of the third. This hindrance, uddhacca-kukkucca, is the agitation and distraction when the mind goes beyond its limits and is out-of-control. We can see it as a kind of nervous disorder. In your attempts to meditate, I'm sure that you have all come across this out-of-control mental activity. An example of restlessness and agitation is the inability to sleep at night because the mind won't slow down, won't rest and relax, but scatters itself in all directions thinking this, thinking that, thinking anything, thinking everything. Such unnecessary agitation doesn't allow the mind to get the rest and peace it needs. When the mind keeps running all over the world, keeps getting involved in everything, it is impossible to perform even a simple task like writing a letter.

Now, we've come to the last nivarana, vicikiccha, wavering and uncertainty. Vicikiccha is uncertainty and doubt concerning the correctness and safety of things. It is being unsure about what is truly correct and safe. We lack confidence and trust in what is happening and what we're doing. Those who follow a religion that takes faith as the basic principle, faith in God or whatever, seldom have a problem with this hindrance. Those of us who follow a religion based in self-confidence, however, encounter doubt much more easily.

This uncertainty, non-belief, trustlessness, and doubt is about what one is, what one has, and what one is doing. For example, we may have doubts about our health, our economic situation, or even our personal safety. We may have doubts about the things we're involved with: "Is it right and proper? Is it safe? Can I depend on it?" This doubt may often have to do with everyday concerns, but it can arise toward Dhamma, or Natural Truth, as well. "Is it really true? Is it of any use?" You might even doubt that there is such a thing as Truth, have doubts about the way to realize Truth, or lack confidence in your potential for awakening. If uncertainty about everyday things hinders us from using them correctly, how much more so when the doubt is about Dhamma. If we think, "What if it's just words? How can I know it's true? This isn't taught at university," then we won't be able to take advantage of and benefit by the Dhamma.

For Christians, vicikiccha may be regarding God, the Bible, or Jesus Christ. For Buddhists, doubt may concern the Buddha, the scriptures, the Dhamma, or practice. When one has even the slightest doubt that everything is correct and that life is safe, then one is under the influence of this nivarana. Take a good, deep look inside and see that vicikiccha might exist in our subconscious all the time.

UNOBSTRUCTED LIFE

Together these five things are called the "nivarana." How is the mind when it is free of the nivarana? If the mind is free of all five hindrances, how is our mental life? Study this mind and know what it is like. Can we call such a life "New Life"?

Here, freedom from the nivarana is called "New Life." Further, New Life ought to be free of the kilesa as well. Half-formed defilements are called "nivarana." Fully developed defilements are called "kilesa." To be New Life, it must be free from the kilesa, too. We must now consider the kilesa in some detail. They can be known easily by the symptoms of the influence they have on the mind. These can be experienced easily and known clearly. It isn't necessary, however, to know all the tiny details of the defilements. We just need to know the main symptoms. With electricity, we may not see the electricity itself and we may not understand it, but we can see its power, its influence, and its symptoms through various electrical appliances and equipment. Similarly, we may never see the defilements themselves, but we can learn all we need to know from their symptoms, from the influence they have on the mind. Their symptoms are many and varied, but we don't have to discuss them all. We will talk about the most important ones, the ones that cause the most trouble in our lives.

TROUBLESOME LOVE

The first of these troublesome symptoms is love. When love arises in the mind, is anything lost? Is there something the mind must suffer and endure? Does it pick up any burdens or loads? What effects does this thing love have on the mind? I'm sure that each of us can understand this phenomenon, as all of us have had some experience with this thing called "love." Previously, we mentioned the meaning of roga, a synonym for kilesa, as "something that pierces and stabs." Does love pierce? Does love stab? To know, we need not look anywhere but within our own experience. So look and see for yourself. Other meanings of defilements are "things that burn"; "things that bind, fetter, and chain"; and "things that dominate and imprison." Do any of these meanings fit with the thing we call "love"? You ought to see whether it is a problem or not. Although many people consider love to be bliss, from the Dhamma point of view it is utter lack of calmness, that is,

supreme disturbance. Examine it closely and realize for yourself whether or not love causes problems. Don't take our word for it, but don't believe all of the romantic propaganda of TV, novels, and pop music, either.

Ordinarily, the thing we call "love" is conditioned out of ignorance (avijja, not-knowing), the ultimate defilement. Although there may, only in certain situations, arise a kind of love that comes from wisdom or is governed by it, as soon as it is the mind of "love," it becomes a problem. It is no longer peaceful or joyful. Just by labeling it "love," it changes from wisdom to ignorance. The terrible dilemma of love developed from the instinct to preserve the species and reproduce. Take a good look at its effects. Can you see all the problems it causes and the torments through which it drags us? Is it a burden? Is it an obstacle to peace, purity, and joy? At the same time, consider how well off we would be if free of this problem. Even non-sexual love, such as the love of our children, parents, and friends, causes us problems by destroying tranquility and happiness. Non-sexual love must be controlled just as much as sexual love. Otherwise, there is no peace. If we said, "Do everything as a lover would do, but do it without love," would you believe that it is possible? Could you act in such a way without any defilement?

There are kinds of love which are Dhamma, such as metta (friendliness, kindness) and karuna (compassion), but they must be correct if problems are to be avoided. Metta and karuna can be defiled by distinctions, discriminations, and attachment, then they are dukkha. Not being able to love and not being able to love what we want to love are problems, are dukkha. All these are wrong. Even the love that isn't directly defiled, love that has nothing to do with sex or sensuality, may be defiled indirectly when contaminated by ego and selfishness. Even the higher forms of love, such as metta and karuna, must be correct.

In short, love is a problem, it isn't peacefulness and joy. It must be controlled, or, if possible, abandoned. Then, the mind will not be disordered. We must transform defiled-love into Dhamma-love. A life that can master love, that is above its influence, should we call that "New Life"? I'm sure that each of you can find the answer.

ANGER & HATRED

Now, we'll talk about love's opposite: anger or ill-will. When it arises, what is it like? It's another kind of fire that burns the mind. It stabs, imprisons, dominates, and fetters the mind. We all know anger very well, we know the many problems it causes. We don't want to get angry, yet we do. We don't want to be angry, yet we remain so. You know how disturbing anger is. If we can control it, how peaceful will that be? Ponder this, please.

The third defilement is hatred, which is different from anger, although both are forms of dislike or not-liking. When something ugly, dirty, or repulsive appears, we hate it. We can't control ourselves, we just hate unattractive, hateful things. That's how it is, because we can't endure the cause of the hatred. Thus, hatred burns, possesses, and torments our mind. Now, think what it would be like if there was nothing to hate and nothing to love. No love and no hate -- what blissful peace that would be! Just like the Arahant (the perfected human being). The Arahant is above the feelings of both hate and non-hate. The liberated mind has no problems with "hateful" or "ugly" things, because there is nothing hateful and nothing not-hateful for that mind which totally fulfills Dhamma by fully realizing Dhamma. Don't misunderstand that it is dangerous to be free of hate, that we need hatred to protect ourselves from danger. Hatred itself is the danger! It's best not to hate, but we never seem to learn. Thus, pitiful instances of hate continue in our world. White-skinned people hate black-skinned people. What's the excuse for such a problem? We shouldn't have problems like that. If we understand correctly, there will be no need to hate and we won't hate.

FEAR OF LIFE

The fourth defilement is fear. Everyone is having this problem, we're all afraid of

something. Fear comes from stupidity, from selfishness, from the craving of a self that desires things it can't have. So we fear! Nowadays, we have every possible kind of fear in this world of ours, especially the fear of nuclear war and annihilation. When we're afraid we become helpless. When there is fear, we lose our mindfulness and wisdom (sati-panna), and our ability to struggle with problems and protect ourselves. To be unafraid is much better.

Fear comes from the instinct of egoism, fear is an instinctual necessity. If there is insufficient knowledge and wisdom, this instinct is impossible to control. Through the study and practice of Dhamma, necessary and sufficient wisdom is developed so that this instinct can be controlled and fear does not arise. Understanding and insight into anatta (not-self) allows us to be free of fear, helps us to uproot fear, and protects us from its future arising. All of you surely can see that fear has no use at all, that it always leads to dukkha. We ought to be able to do anything in the face of fearful and frightening things. Then, we will be in a much better position to deal with those things and succeed in the business of living. If we must fight with an enemy, but cannot do it without fear, we are in no position to fight effectively. Our abilities will be weakened, our wisdom will be diminished, and our mindfulness will be slow. We will be defeated by whatever foe it is. Unafraid, we are able to use our wisdom, mindfulness, and skills in the degree needed to defeat that enemy. Face all frightening things fearlessly. A fearless life is of great use.

POSITIVE DEFILEMENTS

There are many other forms of kilesa. Another is worry and anxiety about the things we love. In Thai and Pali this is called "alaya-avarana," the anxious worrying and thinking about, longing after, dwelling upon, and missing of things we love. This is that spinning around of the mind when it can't stop thinking of beloved things. If the mind can't stop, this keeps it awake at night and causes headaches during the day.

Another kilesa is envy. This happens instinctually on its own. It happens in children without their being taught. Envy is a huge problem for the one who feels it, but it isn't any problem for its object. The first feels dukkha, the latter doesn't.

Finally, we come to possessiveness and miserliness. If it gets too strong, it becomes jealousy, especially the sexual kind. This is yet another form of selfishness. It often takes place in marriages. The husband doesn't want his wife to talk with other men; the wife jealously worries that another woman will steal her husband away. We are all familiar with that pain and suffering.

These are six examples of defilements. There are many more which we could bring up, but we are limited by time. Nonetheless, these few examples are enough to illustrate our point: if we are free of every symptom and condition of defilement, how healthy, well, at ease, happy, and peaceful will we be? It's up to you to discover what this is like, yet even now you ought to be able to imagine its value. The mind that is totally free from all symptoms of these defilements is a totally new way of living. This peace and freedom, this coolness and bliss, is one meaning of New Life.

USING NEW LIFE

Now, for the time that remains, we'll discuss a second meaning of New Life. We must be able to skillfully use this new way of existing -- that comes with freedom from defilements -- to meet our needs. The first aspect of applying the New Life is making the mind happy at any time. For example, through successfully practicing mindfulness with breathing (anapanasati) it is possible to have genuine happiness at any time, in any place. Because of the proper development of mindfulness with breathing, we have influence and control over the mind. We have instant happiness as we need it.

The second aspect of using the New Life is that fully practiced Dhamma can help

the sense organs -- eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind -- to perform most efficiently, as if they were "divine."² By this we mean only that they have more ability than is ordinary. The ordinary, the ears are more efficient than ordinary, the nose and so on are more capable than ordinary, as if they were "divine." Divine (dibba) simply means "beyond ordinary."

MASTERING EXPERIENCE

Third, is the ability to control experience, that is, the mind, so that it is always in a state of correctness. This type of mastery has three aspects: control of the vedana (feelings), control of sanna (perceptions, recognitions, classifications), and control of vitakka (thinking). Controlling the vedana means preventing them from conditioning defilements, or not experiencing any unwanted feelings. (Please note that feeling (*vedana*), here, does not mean emotions). Sanna -- recognizing, evaluating, classifying things as this or that -- can be controlled so that it doesn't lead to dukkha. Controlling vitakka (thought conception) is to control the thinking so that either it is correct or there is no thinking at all. Feelings, perceptions, and thinking can be controlled because there is Dhamma.

Eating delicious food provides an example of the first kind of mastery. If the food is very delicious we become stupid or crazy over it through our delusion about deliciousness. When there is enough Dhamma, we can control the feelings that arise toward that delicious food. Then, we aren't deluded by the deliciousness, we don't eat more than we should, and we don't make any problems out of it. We see it all as "just thus, merely thus," rather than with foolishness and delusion. The delicious food doesn't defeat us, it doesn't control us, it isn't our boss, it doesn't make us do anything stupid. We don't force it to be not delicious. If it's delicious, it stays delicious, but the deliciousness can't control us. We control the deliciousness so that it doesn't control us and force us to do something wrong or foolish.

We can see most easily that people throughout the world today are slaves to deliciousness. Much time is spent making delicious things which serve no other purpose than to excite desire and craving. Then, we compete for those things. Finally, we divide up the world in attempts to control those things and fight endless wars, only because we have lost control of and are slaves to deliciousness. The words "Satan" (the Christian Devil) and "Mara" (the Buddhist Tempter) represent our stupidity regarding deliciousness. We need to know that the feelings (*vedana*) can be controlled.

Now, let's talk about the control of sanna (recognition, classification). Previously, we couldn't remember things well or recall them correctly. From now on, we'll have an excellent memory and clear recollection. Through the mastery of sanna the mind won't fall into false distinctions and misperceptions, that is, the ones which punish us with dukkha. For example, sanna can be controlled so that we don't identify and regard things as being male and being female. Thereby, we're free of the problems that arise from masculinity and femininity. The mind remains cool and calm. Mastery of sanna means controlling it so that it is always correct. Correct means that it causes no dukkha.

Controlling vitakka is to control thought. Whenever there is sanna of something, it invites thinking along the meaning of that sanna. So we think. If it isn't controlled, the thinking goes wrong and dukkha is born. So we control thought only along ways which are correct and beneficial: thinking along the lines of leaving behind sensuality, of not harming or injuring others, and of not troubling anyone even unintentionally. If we want more than that, we can stop thinking altogether. For example, if we will enter samadhi (one-pointed concentration) or samapatti (attainment of deep levels of concentration), we can stop the thinking totally, in all respects. We are able to control vitakka: we can think or we can not think. Or we can think only in the ways we ought to think. Nothing wrong happens and there is no dukkha. This is what is meant by controlling vitakka.

REMOVING THE WOMB OF DEFILEMENT

A fourth, and final, aspect of this mental mastery is the direct control of the defilements themselves, which is to control dukkha and prevent its arising. When there is enough Dhamma, and when Dhamma is practiced sufficiently, attachment (upadana) can be controlled. This control prevents attachment to "good" and attachment to "evil." With no attachment, there is no dukkha. We won't let upadana arise, then the concept of "I" (egoism), which is the womb of defilements, isn't born. Without the concept of "I," there will be no defilements. Once the defilements can be controlled, they are finished. This is the last good result, a fourth kind of mastery, the control of attachment, which automatically controls dukkha.

In these ways, life is mastered and used wisely, so that we reap all the appropriate benefits. Such is the New Life of peace, coolness, and bliss. For example, we have the ability to be happy whenever we need to be. We have such splendid sense organs -- eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind-sense -- that they can be called "divine." Then, we can control the feelings, perceptions, and thinking. Finally, we control attachment so that it never again arises. Thereby, all problems vanish! There isn't even the slightest, most remote chance that the defilements will arise or that there could be dukkha. With these capabilities, life is maintained in the most skillful way and we accomplish whatever must be done. If you look honestly, you'll know within yourself that this is the New Life in its complete meaning: the highest, the supremely new life. This is what you'll receive from the correct and successful application of Dhamma.

The first thing is you study Dhamma, the second is you practice Dhamma, and the third is you receive the fruits of practicing Dhamma. Look at these clearly and carefully consider their benefits. Each of you must be fully self-reliant in doing so. It's up to each of you to realize the meaning, way, and benefits of practicing Dhamma.

THANK YOU

Finally, I'd like to express my joy that you have begun to study, practice, and receive the Dhamma. And one last time: thank you. Thank you all for coming to this place, for making use of it, and helping to make it beneficial. You don't have to thank us for anything, but please allow us to thank you.

Endnotes

1. *Kilesa* is usually translated "defilement." We use it both in a general sense, covering all the aspects and levels of things which dirty, pollute, or tarnish the mind, and in a specific sense, limited to the most noticeable aspect of defilement, the selfish thoughts and emotions such as lust, anger, fear, worry, laziness, and envy.

2. Divine Eye and Divine Ear are believed to be results of highly perfected mental concentration (*samādhi*). They're commonly viewed to be magical, and the foolish may meditate solely to gain these powers.

AFTERWORD

The talks which comprise this book were the first of many series Ajarn Buddhadasa has given during the monthly meditation courses at Suan Mokkh. Subsequently, all the points in these three talks have been expanded upon in greater detail. To the degree allowed by causes and conditions, we will publish as many of these series of talks as possible.

For more on the subject of Spiritual Disease, see *Heartwood Of the Bodhi Tree: The Buddha's Teaching on Voidness* (Wisdom Publications, Boston, USA: 1995).

For more about Mindfulness with Breathing (*anapanasati*), the system of meditation taught at Suan Mokkh, see *Mindfulness With Breathing: Unveiling the Secrets of Life* (Dhamma Study & Practice Group, Bangkok).

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